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BLM

Alaska

A Road Less Traveled

Explore Alaska's Taylor Highway, the gateway to the Klondike

From its start near the Tanana River to its end at the Yukon River, the Taylor is a highway built around, next to, over, and because of rivers. It provides travelers with unparalleled road access to the rivers of east-central Alaska, rivers that have shaped this region in ways as deep as the valleys they have carved through the Yukon-Tanana Uplands. And in so doing, the Taylor Highway traces some of the state's most interesting history along the way.

Beginning at Tetlin Junction, 12 miles east of Tok on the Alaska Highway, the Taylor Highway crosses forested dunes of sand blown off the Tanana River for thousands of years. The highway then skirts the flank of 5,541-foot Mount Fairplay, offering views of the snow-capped Alaska Range as well as the gentler ridges and valleys of the Fortymile region.

This section of highway provides a quick introduction to the massive extent of wildfires that swept through this area during the record-breaking fire seasons of 2004 and 2005. Although travelers will encounter areas of scorched tundra and forest throughout the entire length of the highway, the wildfires spared many areas and added vibrant splashes of fireweed fuchsia to others.

Near milepost 49 the highway crosses West Fork, a branch of the Fortymile River, so named because its confluence with the Yukon River lies 40 miles downstream from Fort Reliance, an old Canadian trading post. The central part of the highway follows various forks and tributaries of this river, which was designated as part of the Wild and Scenic River System in 1980.

It was the 1886 discovery of gold in the Fortymile that touched off Interior Alaska's first gold rush and ushered in a wave of settlement that forever changed the place, not only for its new mining residents but for the Athabascan Indians who occupied this region long before them. According to the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys, the Fortymile's placer mines have by now produced more than a half-million ounces of gold.

Last year's major wildfires along the Taylor Highway may lead to an explosion of wildflowers in 2006.

Further changes came to the area after World War II, when construction of the Taylor Highway commenced. The highway was completed seven years later in 1953.

While road improvements have been made through the years, the experiences of today's travelers would not be completely unfamiliar to those who traveled the Taylor 30 years ago. The pavement, for example, is a recent addition, but it ends near the bridge over the Mosquito Fork at milepost 64, a few miles before the tiny mining town of Chicken.

Past Chicken, the gravel road becomes distinctly more, well, Alaskan, with tight turns, one-lane sections, washboard and blind corners. However, two-wheel-drive passenger vehicles should have no problem making the trip.

With its scattering of cabin and dredge ruins interspersed with active mining camps, Chicken, and more generally, the Fortymile region, feels both wild and inhabited.

As one long-term Chicken resident puts it, "We have wilderness right out the front door."

It's this wilderness, not to mention the region's Gold Rush mystique, that attracts so many international visitors.

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"Germany, New Zealand – they come from all over," says Bill Baker, who with his wife Ann is spending his sixth summer as volunteer campground host at BLM's Walker Fork Campground, located 16 miles east of Chicken.

Baker estimates that roughly half of the campground's visitors are Europeans, many of them Germans traveling in RVs they've rented in Whitehorse. For some reason, many of the Germans he meets seem to come from Hamburg.

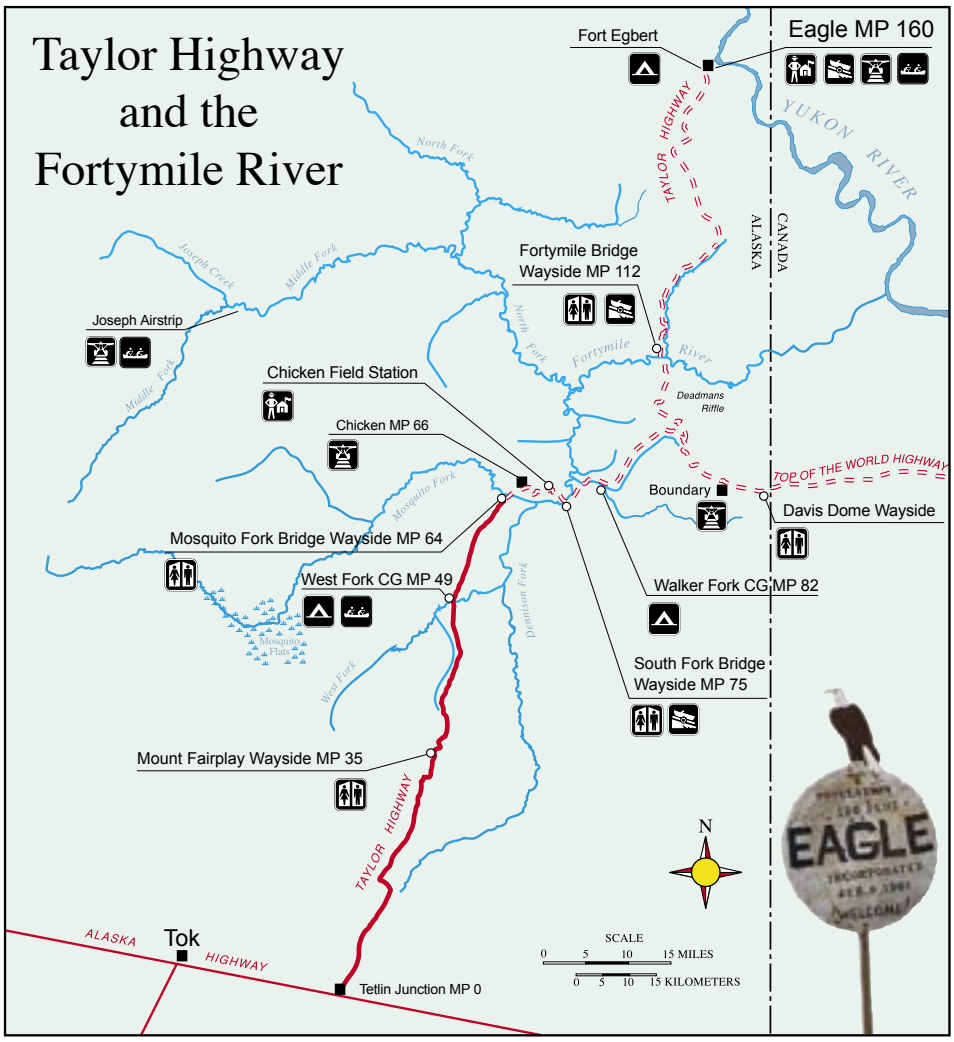
Heart of the Fortymile

Leaving Walker Fork Campground, the highway winds along Jack Wade Creek, one of the most productive gold-mining discoveries in the Fortymile, before climbing to Jack Wade Junction. Continuing straight here takes you onto the Top of the World Highway, which follows breezy ridge tops to the Canadian border and eventually to Dawson City.

If you follow the Taylor Highway to the left, you're headed toward Eagle and one of the most scenic and exciting parts of the highway. Be prepared for hairpin corners so narrow and sharp that tour buses use pilot cars to warn approaching traffic to pull over.

Craig McCaa

The Pedro Dredge, which mined gold on Chicken Creek from 1959-1967, now stands silent in the town of Chicken (milepost 66) with snow-covered Taylor Mountain behind it. The privately owned dredge is periodically open for public tours.



Craig McCaa

An especially exhilarating part of the highway starts at milepost 105, where the highway descends approximately 2,200 feet to the Fortymile River in seven miles of twisty, narrow road that hugs nearly vertical cliffs. Peering over the edge of the road is not for the faint of heart.

Larry Taylor and his wife June have lived at the bottom of that hill for more than 30 years. Prospecting for gold originally brought the Taylors to the Fortymile but for the last six years they've operated a lodge that offers cabins, a sauna, and tours by riverboat or hovercraft.

Taylor thinks the dramatic topography is responsible for making the Fortymile landscape so distinctive from other parts of Alaska. "What captures you is the deepness [of the valleys]," says Taylor. "And once you're down in there, the trees and walls are closer to you."

This landscape was created over the past several million years as the Fortymile River inexorably cut down through bedrock while the surrounding region underwent faulting and uplift. Signs of this downcutting can be seen numerous places on the sides of the Fortymile valley where gravel river terraces are perched up to 800 feet above river level.

End of the Road

From the Fortymile bridge, the highway gradually climbs to the windswept ridges and lingering snowfields of American Summit, where clouds skid across miles of tundra blackened and crisped by the 2005 wildfires. Take time to enjoy the magnificent vistas of the far-off Ogilvie Mountains in Canada before descending 17 miles to the town of Eagle and the Yukon River.

While rivers shaped the settle-

ment and livelihood of all present and former Fortymile communities, Eagle feels the most like a river town. The majestic sweep of the Yukon River, its swift, brown current immensely powerful even 1,400 miles from its mouth at the Bering Sea, dwarfs the picturesque town clustered on its southern bank.

Eagle, with a population of around 150 people, is also the end of the road in more ways than one. It's a captivating, unique town with a rich history and colorful residents, the kind of place where you'd want to slow down and relax even if it weren't for the town's 15 mph speed limit.

Formally organized by miners in 1897, Eagle soon swelled to a population of 1,700 people living in more than 500 cabins and tents.

Partly to impose order on the rapidly growing community, the U.S. military established a fort in Eagle in 1899. Remnants of Fort Egbert sit next to the river on the north side of town, with the former parade ground now serving as a grass airstrip. Across Mission Creek from the fort, the commanding Eagle Bluffs provide a dramatic backdrop for this National Historic Landmark, once home to more than 100 soldiers.

The fort became an important communication center in October

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Travel facts at a glance

The Taylor Highway is not maintained in winter but usually opens in early April and closes in October.

Crossing the border: Travelers arriving from or departing to Canada via the Top of the World Highway must pass through customs at Boundary. Summer hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Alaska time, seven days a week. (Note: Yukon Territory observes Pacific time.)

Camping: BLM operates three campgrounds along the Taylor Highway. The West Fork and Walker Fork campgrounds are located on either side of Chicken at mileposts 49 and 82 respectively. A third campground is located adjacent to Fort Egbert in Eagle. Sites are $8.00 per night. Chicken and Eagle also offer private campgrounds.

Float trips: The Fortymile River is a popular destination for rafters and canoeists. Road access from the Taylor and Top of the World highways allow for various trips lasting from two days to more than a week. Check BLM's Fortymile River brochure for more information.

Chicken: There are several restaurants and private campgrounds as well as the last opportunity to buy gas before Eagle or Dawson City. Local businesses offer limited groceries, gifts, gold panning and tours of Chicken's historic buildings and of Pedro Dredge No. 4, which operated on Chicken Creek from 1959 to 1967. About two miles past Chicken (milepost 68.2) BLM maintains a short but scenic hiking trail to a bluff overlooking the Mosquito Fork dredge with nice views of the river valley.

Eagle: There are two gas stations, a grocery store, a post office, motel, bed and breakfast, rental cabins, and laundry. The town is served by daily flights to and from Fairbanks. Tours of Eagle's historic buildings, including those at Fort Egbert, start daily at 9 a.m. at the courthouse and cost $5 per person. The National Park Service's visitor center for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the summer.

Services: Gas can be purchased in Tok, Chicken and Eagle.

For more information: Contact a BLM-Alaska office or an Alaska Public Lands Information Center (in either Fairbanks, Tok or Anchorage) for BLM's brochures on the Taylor Highway and the Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River.

Craig McCaa

An RV climbs through the forest charred in 2004 near the Walker Fork Campground at milepost 82

Road Less Traveled

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1900 with its connection to the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System. Messages that once took up to a year to reach Washington, D.C. could now be sent in a matter of days. After a wireless telegraph station replaced the land lines, most of the soldiers left Eagle in 1911. A small detachment remained until the radio station burned down in 1925.

BLM began restoring five of the fort's original buildings in the 1970s, and additional restoration work continues today. Summer visitors can visit the fort, as well as Eagle's 1901 courthouse, customs house and other historic buildings, on daily walking tours.

One of the tour guides is Steve Hamilton, a BLM employee who spent his first winter in Eagle in 1970-1971 and has lived there ever since.

Most Eagle visitors arrive on buses and the riverboat *Yukon Queen II* that together transport organized tours between Dawson City and Tok.

But Hamilton also encounters a fair number of visitors exploring on their own. "You make a conscious choice to come here," says Hamilton. "It's mostly independent, adventurous people."

In fact, several travelers have told Hamilton they arrived at Jack Wade Junction and turned off toward Eagle "because most people weren't."

There's no doubt that driving the entire 160-mile highway entails a commitment, especially when you have to turn around and drive the same way out. But the Taylor Highway, with its memorable scenery and fascinating history, offers today's travelers treasures as rich – if more easily-won – as those sought by the gold-seekers who followed the Fortymile's rivers a century ago.

— Craig McCaa

BLM helps preserve historic town

Dennis R. Green

Steele Creek Roadhouse

This summer BLM is planning stabilization work for several log cabins at one of the Fortymile region's most intriguing historic sites.

Steele Creek, a popular stop for floaters on the Fortymile River, lies a little more than seven river miles downstream of the Fortymile bridge. A six-mile trail, muddy in places, also leads down to Steele Creek from the Taylor Highway.

The centerpiece of Steele Creek is its roadhouse, one of the oldest standing structures in the Fortymile Mining District. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Steele Creek is one of only two two-story roadhouses still standing in Alaska. Now quiet and overgrown with willows, the Steele Creek site provides a critical link to Alaska's not-so-distant past, when isolated roadhouses served as vibrant community centers and transportation centers.

The roadhouse itself was originally built as a single-story log structure in 1898. The second story was added about 1910. The post office and restaurant were located on the first floor, while sleeping accommodations, with separate sections for men and women, were located on the second floor.

Steele Creek's post office operated from 1907 to 1951, when mail service was moved to Boundary. Mail arrived at Steele Creek three times per month, by horse during the summer and by dogsled in winter. A private carrier took mail from Steele Creek on to the settlement at Walker Fork, 25 miles away via a good ridge trail.

Steele Creek's location on the main overland trail between the towns of Eagle and Chicken made it an important transportation center during the first half of the 20th century. The roadhouse provided traders, freighters and other travelers with a welcome rest stop during arduous journeys by wagon, dogsled, horse or foot. Miners and other local settlers stopped by to pick up supplies and catch up on the latest news.

— Craig McCaa

The 'red can brand' helps Alaska archeologists

Fairbanks District Office archeologist Steve Lanford is glad so many early Alaskan pioneers drank Hills Brothers coffee. Lanford is finishing a new field manual that will help archeologists use the distinctive red Hills Brothers coffee cans to determine when historic sites were occupied. The manual includes images of approximately 15 different cans spanning 63 years.

According to Lanford, Hills Brothers cans are especially valuable to Alaska archeologists for several reasons. For one thing, the brand's popularity coincided with a particularly interesting time in Alaskan history.

"For about 13 years, from 1900 to 1913, Hill Brothers had the largest market share for coffee sold in the state, in part because it was the only company to use vacuum packing," Lanford says. "So the cans are often found at cabin ruins, old mining camps and other sites dating back to Gold Rush days."

Because of the rigors of the vacuum packing process, Hills Brothers used good-quality metal cans that tend to last longer than other cans at these sites.

What's most useful, though, is that Hills Brothers kept changing its label. Most of the differences between cans are subtle—a slightly altered letter "r" or a differently notched corner in a border—but these changes can be tied to certain years thanks to a 1967 company history that included depictions of the front labels of various cans, along with their dates of production.

Craig McCaa

(left) **Items that appear to be trash at many historic sites in Alaska are preserved in the cold, dry climate and can provide valuable information to archaeologists— a good reason to leave things right where you find them.**
(right) **Archaeologist Steve Lanford's idea will help others accurately date cultural sites in Alaska.**

Lanford's manual improves on that document by including complete images of the label, in case only part of it is legible, and by pointing out helpful identifying features of each can.

"These cans are what we hope to find [at sites], because they cover discrete periods of times," he says. "We assume that the empty cans were purchased during the time the site was being used and were then discarded on the site. This time period is not exact, but it's certainly more accurate than just saying that the trash looks to date from a particular time period."

Producing the Hills Brothers manual has been a long-term interest of Lanford's. He says the idea was partly inspired by field manuals he used in the military to identify and safely dispose of unexploded ordnance.

Lanford expects to print about 500 copies of the manual, which should allow archeologists to make age determinations in the field and leave cans where they found them — just as they ask the public to do.

— Craig McCaa

Craig McCaa

Subtle changes in coffee can labels tie in with specific dates of production.

ALASKA TRAIL USE 101

WHERE AND HOW YOU RIDE MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE IN EVERY SEASON

Craig McCaa

Finally you've got some days off and you're headed out to explore the great state you live and work in. Here's what you need to know about the trails you encounter.

Trails, access and land status go hand-in-hand. If you see a trail that you want to explore, you need to know if it is open to the public and your mode of travel, otherwise you could be trespassing or utilizing a trail beyond its intended purpose. Land status in Alaska is changing; old maps may not provide you with accurate information. To avoid trespassing on private land, do some research on land status information and get current maps.

While seeking out an Alaskan adventure, don't assume that any trail you see is open to travel. Many trails along highways and roads in Alaska are on private land, allowing the owner to reach their home, wood lot, or seasonal cabin. While driveways may seem obvious in populated areas, they are often mistaken for trails in rural Alaska.

In Alaska there are hundreds of public easements across private land which provide access to public land. These easements are often referred to as "17b easements" reserved under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Certain restrictions apply to these easements and the restrictions vary. Consistent to every easement, however, is the requirement to stay on the easement until you reach public land. Using the easement beyond its intended purpose means you are trespassing on private land.

Most well-used 17b easements are marked at the trailhead and provide specific information and guidance for utilizing the easement. Safety considerations particular to the trail may also be posted. Take time to read this important trailhead information.

Some trails along easements provide access to prime fishing, hunting and recreation locations but require a permit from the private land owner to deviate from the easement. It is the trail user's responsibility to be informed and to obtain permits when needed.

— Marnie Graham

Open... thanks to responsible users like you!

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) riding usually increases during some of the worst weather conditions for trails in wet boggy areas, deep tundra or clay soils. During breakup, people are anxious to get out and explore after a long winter. Trails experience a great deal of saturation and run-off at this time of year and need a few weeks of dry weather to set and harden. You can help ensure that trails remain open by avoiding traveling on them early in the season.

Later during Alaska's fall hunting season, it is also a difficult time for trails that are often wet due to the changing weather. Repeated use of wet trails can create deep ruts and bogs, trail braiding and erosion. Cultural and natural resources can be disturbed or destroyed and occasionally a trail can be rutted or damaged beyond repair. Avoid leaving the trail in wet areas; this increases the damage and leads to braiding.

To help keep trails open during wet conditions take a few tips from Tread Lightly (www.treadlightly.org):

- Stay on designated routes, ride in the middle of trails to minimize trail widening or trail braiding, and stop frequently to check ahead by foot to assess trail conditions.
- On slick trails, moderate the throttle and use the clutch to gain maximum traction with minimum tailspin. Avoid spinning your wheels, which causes rutting.
- Avoid roosting around the apex of the turn when climbing and brake-sliding during descent, both of which gouge the trail.
- Cross streams only at designated fording points or where the trail crosses the stream; check water depth and trail hardness before crossing.
- When using a tree as an anchor to winch, use a wide tree strap to avoid damage to the trunk of the tree. Let the winch do the work; never drive the winch.

Keep in mind, many trails occur in remote locations and lack resources, such as gravel, nearby that allow for repair. Also, high maintenance costs make it impossible for land managing agencies to maintain trails regularly. Agencies and private land owners are not required to maintain and repair trails and easements. The only way to ensure that a trail will remain useable and accessible is to use it responsibly.

Stay on the trail when crossing wet spots and streams.

Craig McCaa

A mountain biker negotiates rocks and ruts on the Quartz Creek Trail in the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

For more information

Landrecords.info is a joint project by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the BLM. The site provides a common entrance to the cadastral-related data systems of these agencies, as well as those of local government and Native organizations.

Log on to www.blm.gov/ak or visit BLM public information centers and offices in Anchorage, 222 W. 7th Ave., (907) 271-5960; Glennallen, Mile 186.5 Glenn Highway, (907) 822-3217; Fairbanks, 1150 University Ave., (907) 474-2200; Juneau, 100 Savikko Road, Mayflower Island, (907) 364-1554; Kotzebue, (907) 442-3430; and Nome, (907) 443-2177.

Log on to www.dnr.state.ak.us or visit Alaska DNR public information centers in Anchorage, 550 W. 7th Ave., (907) 269-8411; Fairbanks, 3700 Airport Way, (907) 451-2705; and Juneau, 400 Willoughby Ave., (907) 465-3400.

Other helpful websites

Alaska Public Lands Information Center: www.nps.gov/aplic/
Joint BLM and Alaska DNR Land records websites: www.dnr.state.ak.us/cgi-bin/lris/landrecords
Alaska State Geospatial Clearing house: www.asgdc.state.ak.us/

Trading spaces on Juneau's Mayflower Island

Leah Dailey

BLM's office in Juneau, dating to 1950, was recently rennovated. The building houses more than 20,000 mining and mineral items.

Mayflower Island, sometimes known as Juneau Isle, is a minute parcel of land in the middle of the Gastineau Channel of Juneau with a rich Alaska mining and mineral history. Four separate tenants have traded occupation of the island in the last 100 years—including the current resident, the BLM's Juneau-John Rishel Mineral Information Center.

Mayflower Island, across from downtown Juneau, is in one of Alaska's most picturesque settings.

In the late 1800s, the Navy claimed the island while it considered the possibility of using the location for a coal loading port to fuel its warships. When a local source of coal could not be located, the Navy decided not to use the island.

Later, Juneau's Treadwell Mining Co. (est. 1881) built an amusement park on the island for its workers. Workers and their families could dance in the pavilion at the peak of the island or visit a small zoo with tame deer and a bear. According to David Stone, director of consumer affairs for Alaska Electric Light and Power, "the peak of the amusement park was around 1910. Each year on the Fourth of July, the company would invite local Juneau citizens to attend this social extravaganza. Bands were brought in and guests were ferried to the island for the day-long celebration." One remnant of the park, a den that housed a tame bear, is still visible on the northwest side of Mayflower Island.

In 1943, the vacant island space was transferred from the Navy to the Department of the Interior. The agency had maintained an office in Juneau since 1911 but had never had its own space. In 1948, construction began on the experiment station for the U.S. Bureau of Mines which was completed in 1950; the original building still stands today. The Community Development Department for the City and Borough of Juneau has suggested nominating the building as a historic property of Juneau and for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1996, the bureau was deactivated and the facility and mineral assessment functions were transferred to BLM. A major responsibility of the staff involves evaluating the mineral potential of regional mining districts in Alaska.* These important studies include estimates of the type, amount and distribution of mineral deposits and estimates of the development potential and economic feasibility when applicable. Each district assessment takes approximately three to five years. Interim and final reports are published as the data becomes available.

The Tom Pittman Mining and Geology Museum at the center houses one of the best collections of Alaska rocks and minerals in Alaska. BLM Geologist Peter Bittenbender explained that "several rock and mineral specimens at the JRMIC are near Smithsonian Museum caliber, most specifically, the epidote specimens from Green Monster Mountain on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska, the garnets from Wrangell, and the cinnabar and stibnite from the Red Devil Mine on the Kuskokwim."

Mineral reports online

BLM-Alaska has posted 482 Alaska mineral assessment reports and geologic investigations on the Internet. The reports, from 1946 to 1995, are organized by mining districts. Funding for the multi-year project was provided by the Minerals Data Information Rescue in Alaska program. View the collection online at www.blm.gov/ak/jrmic.

Leah Dailey

Museum-quality Alaska rock and mineral specimens are a favorite with visitors and school groups.

In addition to the collective displays of minerals and rocks, the BLM office also houses the Mineral Information Center. This specialized library contains more than 20,000 items, including serials, government documents, industry reports and many mining and geologic publications more than 100 years old.

Another crowd pleaser according to Chris Dewitt, supervisory physical scientist, is the three-dimensional relief map of Alaska created by the Army Corps of Engineers. This map has been on display on the same wall since its purchase by the Bureau of Mines more than 50 years ago. The map is novel because there are large areas of Alaska shown on the map that were not surveyed at the time the map was created.

For more than 100 years, Mayflower Island has been a place of mining and mineral history. Now it is the site of one of BLM's most picturesque office settings. If you won't be visiting Juneau in the near future, the center has a historical web site which gives details of past and present operations of the BLM office as well as the other residents of Mayflower Island.

— Leah Dailey

*These studies, which rely on annual appropriations, are authorized by Section 1010 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Leah Dailey

Mineral reports more than 100 years old can be found on the bookshelves at the center.

Juneau-John Rishel Mineral Information Center

Collections
- books and periodicals
- state and federal geologic maps
- mineral property files
- mineral survey plats
- land status information/master title plats
- Alaska rocks, minerals and minerals artifacts

Services
- online land status information
- access to mineral property files
- professional geologic assistance
- interlibrary loans
- mineral assessments
- public educational services

Hours
Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.
phone (907) 364-1553
100 Savikko Road
Douglas, AK 99824

Web: http://www.blm.gov/ak/jrmic/museum/geo_ed.html.

Leah Dailey

An ore car keeps the center's flagpole company while overlooking Gastineau Channel.

Frontier Flashes

Late-breaking news from around Alaska

Klutina Lake Road closed: The Brenwick-Craig 17b easement (also referred to as the Klutina Lake Road), is unsafe for travel and is temporarily closed. Legal public access bypass routes around unsafe slide areas are currently under construction by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. A public access route is hoped to be re-established in mid-July, 2006. Those wishing to access private land beyond the easement must request a permit from Ahtna, Incorporated, to avoid trespassing on private land. For updates on the condition of the road and public access, contact the Glennallen Field Office at 907-822-3217.

Withdrawals review report sent to Congress: BLM has completed a congressionally-requested advisory report on the status of millions of acres of federal land in Alaska currently withdrawn for study and classification. Half of public comments received on the draft supported the lifting of the withdrawals and the other half preferred BLM's land use planning process as a means to address withdrawals. No environmental analysis is required under the National Environmental Policy Act. Copies of the report will be posted on the BLM website www.blm.gov/ak.

Legacy wells plugged: In late April, BLM-Alaska completed another legacy well plugging operation in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). Five wells in NPR-A that were identified in the *Legacy Well Summary Report of 2004* as those that posed the greatest risk to health, safety and the environment were permanently plugged and abandoned at a cost of approximately $2 million. The wells were located on the Simpson Peninsula in the northwest portion of the reserve. The BLM has now plugged 10 legacy wells during the last three years.

Six recreation brochures released: BLM-Alaska has released updated versions of three popular statewide color brochures to help you plan your summer outings. *Alaska Freshwater Fishing* lists places to fish on public lands and also includes an attractive poster on the reverse that features. *Alaska River Adventures* includes a large table that allows you to compare river trip options on six wild and scenic rivers managed by BLM. It also has maps, an equipment checklist and safety information. *BLM in Alaska* has a map of public lands in Alaska managed by BLM, BLM office addresses and websites, and a description of the agency's major programs. All are available free at most BLM offices throughout the state and at the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers. BLM-Alaska also has issued redesigned and updated recreation brochures for the Denali Highway, Gulkana River and Delta River. These three are available at the BLM offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Glennallen.

BLM signs MOUs with Chitina and Ahtna: The BLM Glennallen Field Office signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Chitina Traditional Indian Village, establishing government-to-government relations. The federally recognized tribe has a cultural interest in lands managed by the field office, particularly lands near the drainages of the Tonsina and Tiekel rivers. The field office now holds MOUs with six of the 11 villages within the East Alaska Resource Management Plan boundary.

The Glennallen office also signed a MOU with Ahtna Inc., the primary corporate land owner within the field office boundary. Ahtna is one of the 13 regional corporations established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The MOU establishes procedures for communication and cooperation in resource management and defines how parties will work together to protect cultural sites and data collected.

Science center receives grant: The nonprofit Friends of the Campbell Creek Science Center received a $2,500 grant from Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. to support educations programs at the center. Alyeska operates the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. The BLM Anchorage Field Office operates the science center, which offers 40,000 visitors a variety of outdoor educational experiences each year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

"Take Pride in America" and lend a hand along the Gulkana National Wild River Sunday, August 6 by participating in a National Public Land Day clean-up event near Sourdough Campground. The event will include free camping, food, t-shirts, prizes and organized, educational activities for children ages 7-12. For more information contact Marnie Graham at the Glennallen Field Office at 907-822-3217.

Editor's note: *This is my last issue as editor for* BLM-Alaska Frontiers *as retirement beckons. I have contributed to most of its 100 issues since this news magazine was created in 1986 when two other periodicals,* Energy Quarterly *and* Conveyance News *merged. Since then we have attempted to keep you informed through* Frontiers *of some of the exciting and perplexing aspects of managing your public lands in Alaska. The new editor, Wendy Longtin, will provide a fresh perspective while continuing this tradition.*

Here's some light reading for the summer...

BLM published its Draft Resource Management Plan for the Kobuk-Seward

Peninsula May 5, 2006 and has just concluded a series of public meetings and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Section 810 hearings in a number of Alaska communities. The 90-day public comment period ends August 4.

The plan will guide BLM's future management of more than 13 million acres of public land in northwest Alaska. The accompanying environmental impact statement analyzes four alternatives to address the conflict between sport hunting and subsistence use in the Squirrel River, one of the primary concerns raised during scoping. Other planning issues addressed include access, transportation, mining, water quality and economic opportunities.

For more information, contact the planning team leader, Jeanie Cole, at 907-474-2340 or monitor the project website at http://www.blm.gov/ak/ksp/index.html.

BLM will release its *Final Proposed East Alaska Resource Management Plan* in late June. The plan will replace the 1980 Southcentral Management Framework Plan covering 7.1 million acres of public lands managed by the Glennallen Field Office. The planning area is interspersed with lands managed by the State of Alaska and Alaska Native corporations and villages and includes two designated Wild and Scenic rivers, the Bering Glacier and the Denali Highway.

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) decisions will designate areas as "open," "limited" or "closed" to OHV use. The BLM's preferred alternative would revoke a portion of PLO 5150 for lands north of Paxson to allow conveyance to the State of Alaska. Future management action to preserve scientific values at the Bering Glacier are also outlined.

For more information, contact Bruce Rogers, East Alaska Lead Planner, 907-822-3217, or monitor the project website at http://www.blm.gov/ak/gdo/landplan/index.html.

The *Ring of Fire Proposed Final Resource Management Plan* is expected to be published in late July. The plan will outline BLM management for 1.3 million acres of public land in Southwest, Southcentral and Southeast Alaska and the Aleutian Islands.

For more information, contract planning team leader Robert Lloyd, 907-267-1214 or monitor the project website at http://www.blm.gov/ak/.

Craig McCaa

Central Yukon Field Office Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist Tim Hammond discussing the Kobuk-Seward plan at a public meeting in Ambler in June.

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Alaska Fire Service smoke-jumpers drop in on National Trails Day volunteers

Teresa McPherson

Teresa McPherson

Doug Ballou

(bottom right) On June 3, more than 200 National Trails Day volunteers at BLM's Campbell Tract in Anchorage planted 450 spruce and alder seedlings and helped compact 500 feet of trail with Typar and gravel.
(upper left) Volunteers also uprooted dandelions and other invasive weeds near the Science Center.
(upper right) After a morning of trail work, volunteers and visitors were treated to lunch and a visit with BLM Alaska Fire Service smokejumpers who parachuted onto the Campbell Tract Air-strip as part of their refresher training. Following the jumps, the smokejumpers talked with families and children and answered questions about wildfire, the smokejumper program and careers in fire management.

Each year the Anchorage Field Office, Anchorage Parks and Recreation, and REI team up to host National Trails Day projects on Campbell Tract and adjacent Municipal parklands.

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BLM Alaska Frontiers

Managing editor
Edward Bovy, (907) 271-3318

Contributing writers
Leah Dailey
Marnie Graham
Craig McCaa
Teresa McPherson
Editorial
Wendy longtin
Design/Illustration
Vanessa Rathbun

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